

A watercolor-style illustration of the Earth, showing continents in shades of green and yellow and oceans in various shades of blue. The globe is centered in the background.

Solutions Through Reproductive Health: Why Family Planning Matters to Climate Change

 POPULATION
CONNECTION

Review

- Population growth contributes to climate change and increases climate vulnerability throughout the world.
- Some of the world's fastest growing regions are also the most vulnerable to climate change, which means that more people are exposed to climate impacts who lack the capacity to readily respond or recover.



Review

- Climate justice is a term used to describe climate change in terms of the uneven distribution of climate impacts around the world and the embodied effects felt disproportionately according to social status (largely a measure of geography, governmental structure, class, race, and gender).



Review

- Zoonotic disease emergence is linked to population growth, habitat destruction, wildlife trade, agriculture, antimicrobial resistance, and deforestation.

- In order to prevent the next pandemic, we must reduce our impact on plants, animals, and the living environment. A greater understanding of the interconnections between human health and ecosystem health must be integrated into our social, political, and economic systems.



An aerial photograph of a river delta, showing a central river channel that branches out into numerous smaller channels and distributaries. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the surrounding land is a mix of brown and light green, indicating different types of vegetation and soil. The text 'POPULATION HEALTH ← ENVIRONMENT' is overlaid on the left side of the image, with a blue arrow pointing from 'ENVIRONMENT' to 'HEALTH'.

**POPULATION
HEALTH ←
ENVIRONMENT**



Family planning is not only a matter of human rights; it is also central to women's empowerment, reducing poverty, building climate resilience and achieving sustainable development.

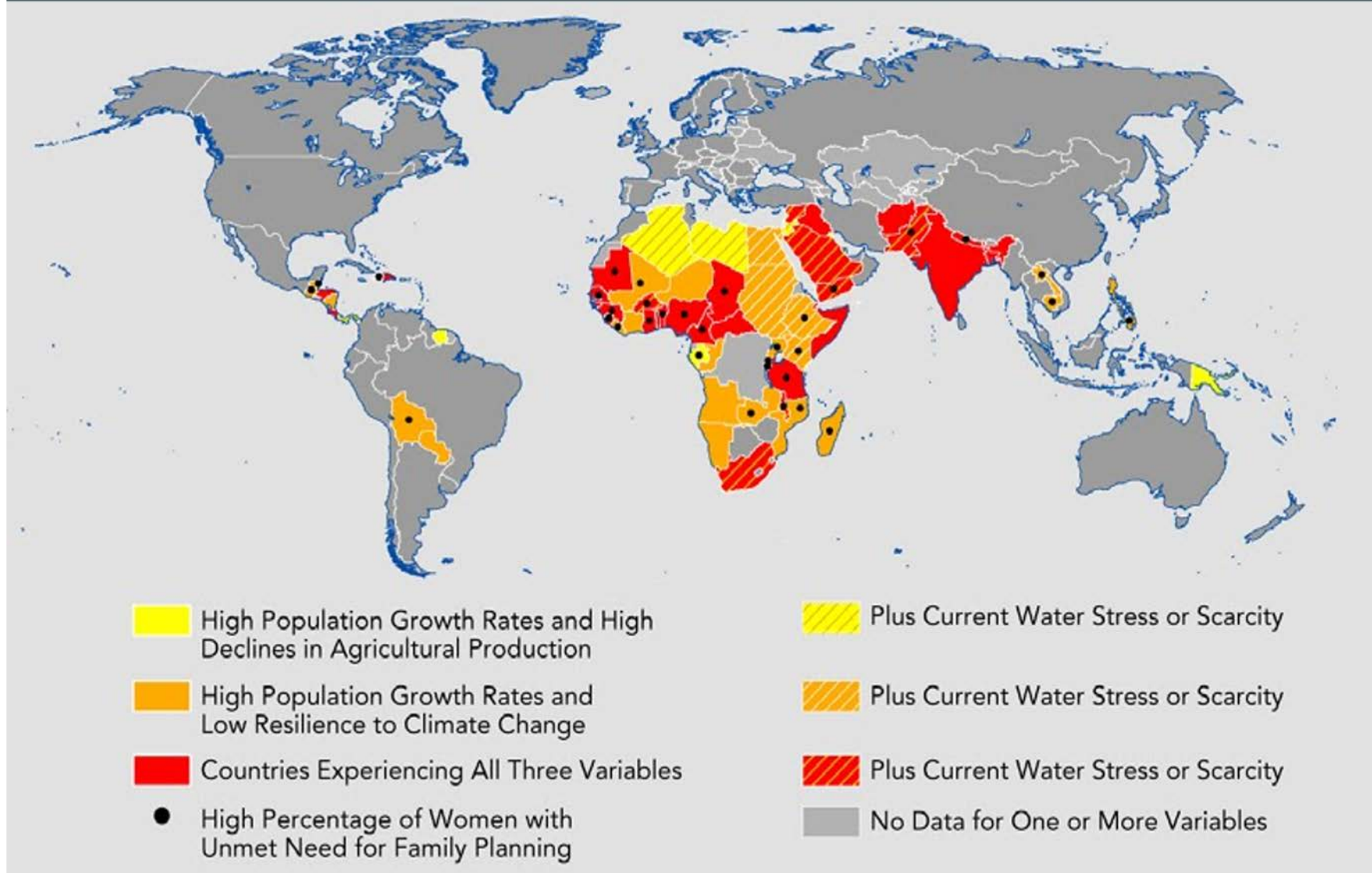


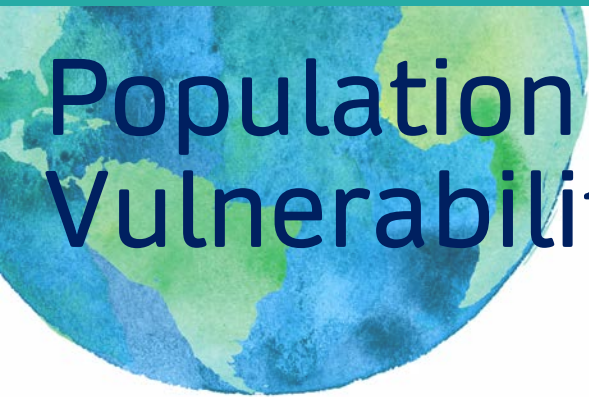
Population and Climate Vulnerability

- Globally, rapid population growth compounds the threats posed by climate change.
- High levels of unmet family planning needs in low-income countries worsen pressures already felt by rapid population growth, including:
 - resource depletion
 - strains on economic growth
 - Limited access to resources like education and health care
 - low status of women
 - overall health



Family Planning Needs in Population and Climate Change Hotspots





Population and Climate Vulnerability

According to the UN, the world's 47 least developed countries are also the fastest growing. Many are projected to double in population between 2020 and 2050 – increasing strain on already scarce resources and slowing progress in health and economic growth.

Sources: UN Population Prospects 2019
Time 2019

Projected population increase from 2019-2100 in the 10 most climate change-threatened countries

increase from 2019

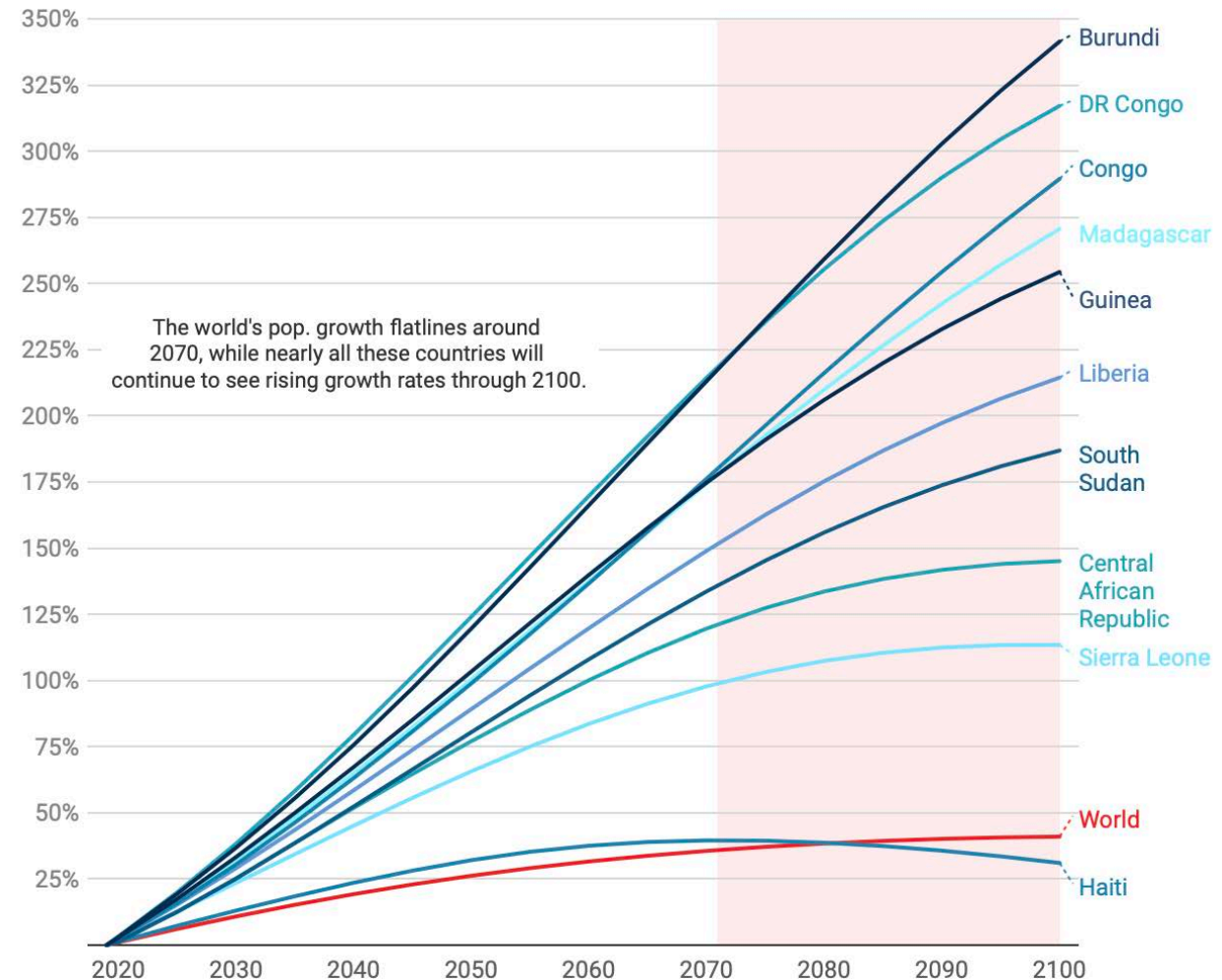
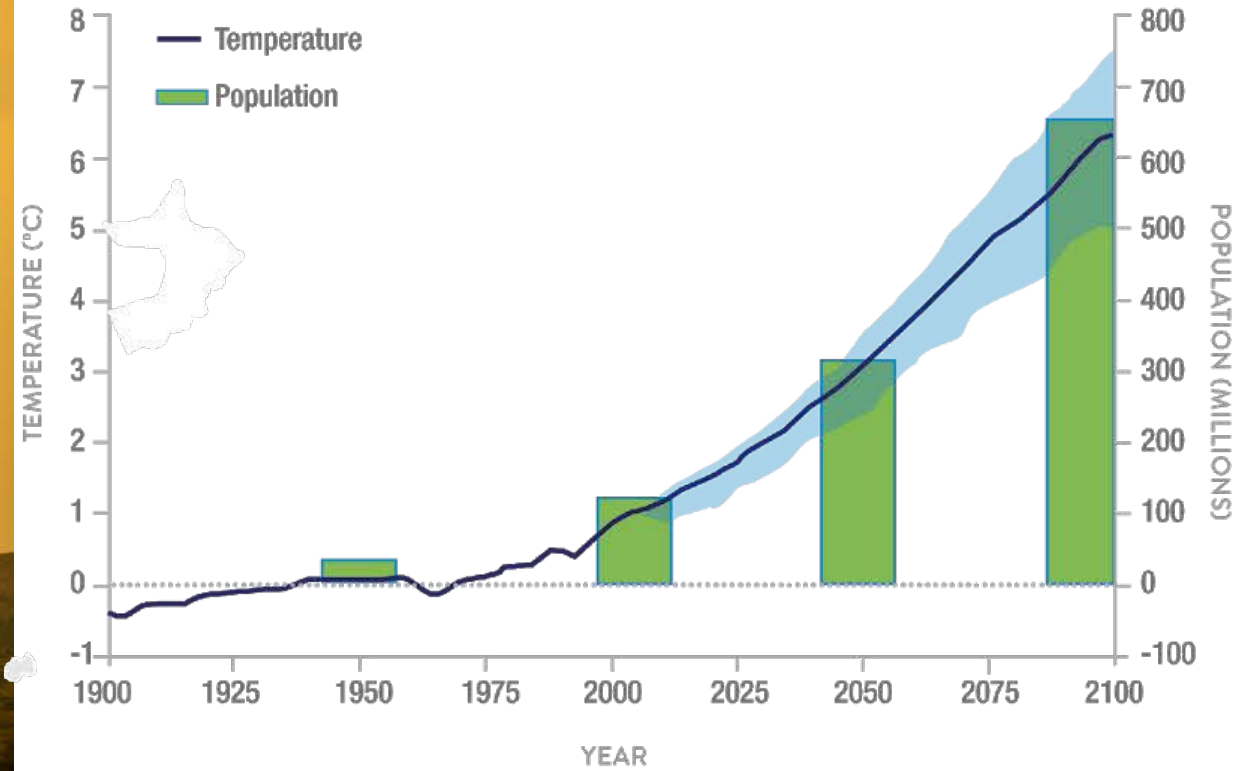


Chart: Elijah Wolfson for TIME • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)





UNFCCC's National Adaptation Programs of Action (NAPAs)

Table 1. Extent and frequency of reference to rapid population growth among the 40 National Adaptation Programmes of Action reports

Rapid population growth	Number of countries (n = 40)	Countries
Not mentioned	3	Eritrea, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe
Identified as pertinent to at least one specific consequence of climate change	37	Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sudan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia
Identified as a main priority	6	Ethiopia, Gambia, Kiribati, Malawi, Samoa, Uganda

Table 2. Ten most-cited issues identified as linked to population growth by 37 National Adaptation Programmes of Action reports

Population/adaptation issue	National Adaptation Programmes of Action Reports (n = 37)
Soil degradation/erosion	21
Fresh water scarcity	18
Migration	18
Deforestation	17
Inadequate farm land per capita	14
Loss of biodiversity	11
Disease and health system constraints	8
Loss of natural habitat	8
Diminishing fish stocks	7
Desertification	5



*Women and children
are healthier*

a fundamental aspect of
building climate
resilience

*Women become more
empowered*

increasing possibilities
for engaging in
climate adaptation
efforts

*Rates of unintended
pregnancies drop*

resulting in smaller families
and a reduced demand for
climate-sensitive resources
like food and water

Meeting women's needs for
FP/RH benefits climate
adaptation



*Slower population
growth*

lessens pressure on local
natural resources and
exposes fewer people to
climate impacts



HEALTH BENEFITS

- Reduces maternal mortality & morbidity
 - Reduces infant and child mortality
 - Reduces rates of unintended pregnancy
 - Reduces unsafe abortion rates
 - Increases health overall
-



Photo by Theodore Goutas on Unsplash

Voluntary Family Planning and Reproductive Health care

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Increases education rates for women and girls
 - Improves livelihoods and wellbeing
 - Reduces poverty
 - Relieves population pressure on:
 - Natural resources
 - Economic growth
 - Food production
 - Infrastructure development
 - State stability
 - Slower population growth reduces greenhouse gas emissions
 - Lessens climate vulnerability
-

Informed choice: enable women and couples to freely and responsibly determine the number, timing and spacing of their births.



Solutions Through Reproductive Health

When education levels rise for women and girls, they gain social, political and economic power.

- Higher levels of education afford more options for sustained employment and help increase livelihoods.
 - More resources become available to help women and girls choose when and how to start a family.
- Women who are educated tend statistically to have fewer, healthier children.





Top 5 solutions to climate change

54.4
Tropical Forest Restoration



(FAMILY PLANNING & EDUCATING GIRLS)

85.4*
Health and Education

87.4
Reduced Food Waste



57.7
Refrigerant Management



65.0
Plant-rich Diets


*CO₂-equivalent reduction by 2050 (GT)

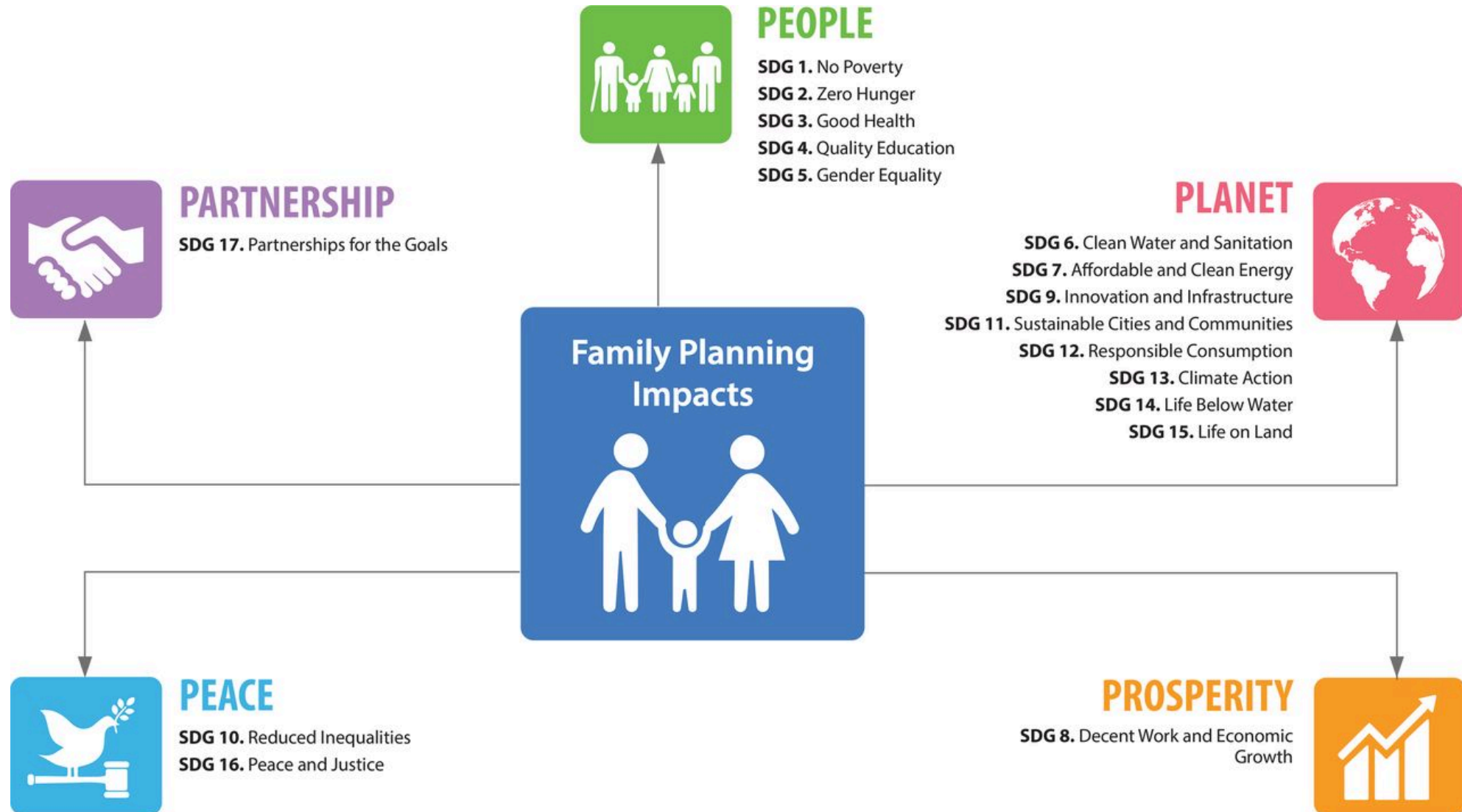


Individual Solutions

The rankings shown here are based on projected emissions impact globally. The relative importance of a given solution can differ significantly depending on context and particular ecological, economic, political, or social conditions.

Scenario 1

Overall Ranking	Solution	TOTAL CO ₂ -eq (GT) Reduced/ Sequestered (2020-2050)	Net First Cost To implement solution (Billion \$US)	Net Lifetime Cost To operate solution (Billion \$US)	Net Lifetime Profit other implementation & operation (Billion \$US)
1	Reduced Food Waste	87.4	—	—	—
 2	Health and Education	85.4	—	—	—
3	Plant-Rich Diets	65.0	—	—	—
4	Refrigerant Management	57.7	—	600	—
5	Tropical Forest Restoration	55.4	—	—	—
6	Onshore Wind Turbines	47.2	800	-3,800	—
7	Alternative Refrigerants	43.5	—	—	—
8	Utility-Scale Solar Photovoltaics	42.3	-200	-12,900	—
9	Improved Clean Cookstoves	31.3	100	1,900	—
10	Distributed Solar Photovoltaics	27.9	400	-7,800	—





2.1

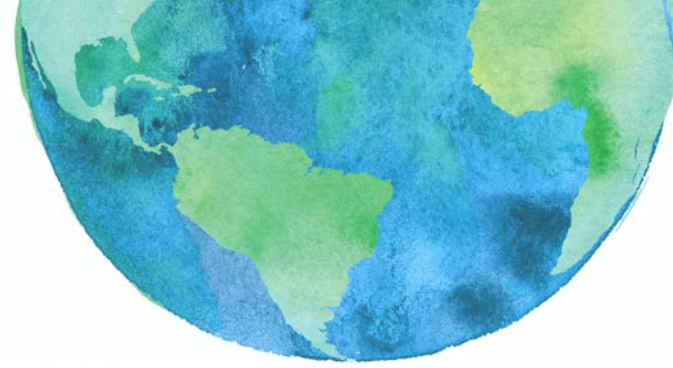
In LMICs, 218 million women are considered to have an unmet need for modern contraception because they want to avoid a pregnancy but are not using a modern method.

1,640 million women of reproductive age, 2019



923 million want to avoid a pregnancy

*148 million using no method plus 70 million using a traditional method. *Notes:* Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding. LMICs=low- and middle-income countries (see Figure 1.1). *Source:* reference 45.



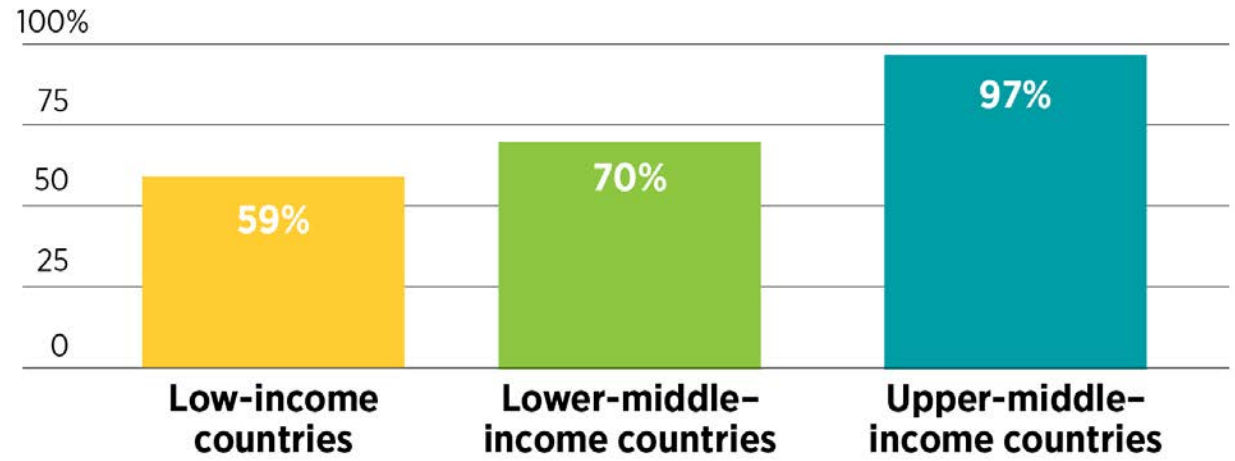
Investing in sexual and reproductive health care would dramatically reduce unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and maternal deaths

	Annual number			% change if all needs are met
	At current levels of care	If all needs are met	Averted if all needs are met	
Unintended pregnancies	111M	35M	76M	-68%
Unsafe abortions	35M	10M	26M	-72%
Maternal deaths	299K	113K	186K	-62%

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Unmet needs for services are greatest in the poorest countries

This is apparent when examining the proportion of women who deliver their babies in a health facility



guttmacher.org



2/3 of 103 countries surveyed over the past several months have experienced disruptions in family planning services

- *World Health Organization*

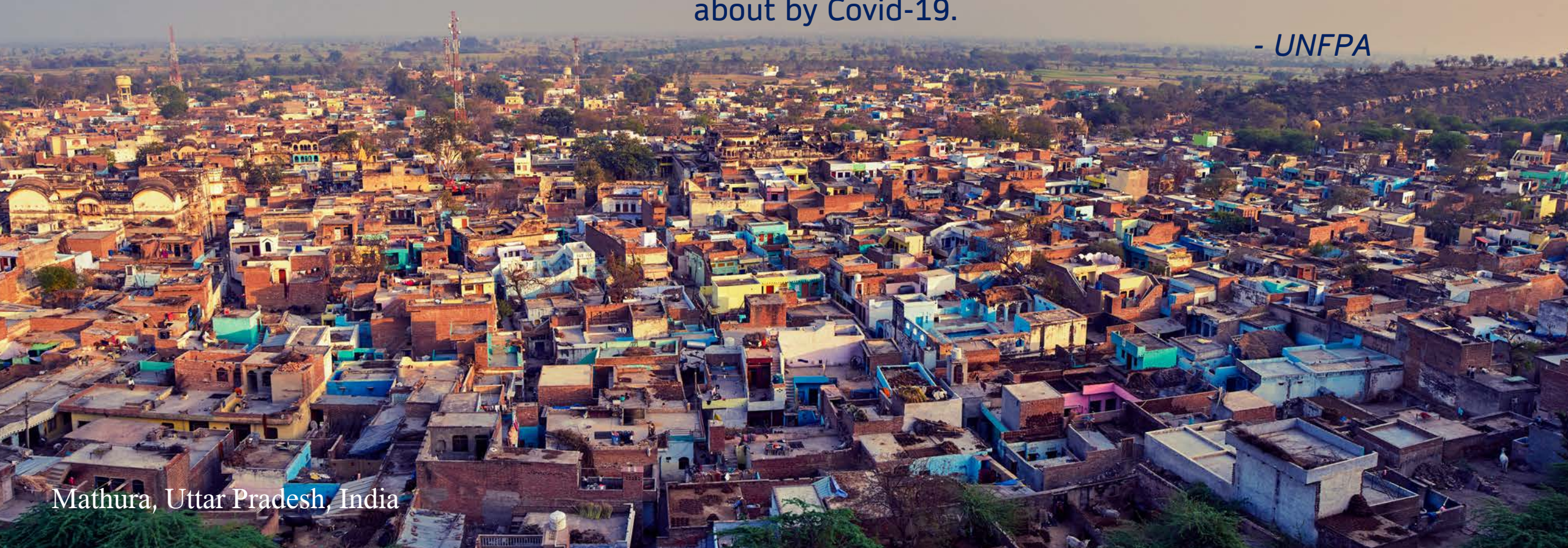
- Across 37 countries, nearly 2 million fewer women received services between January and June than in the same period last year --- 1.3 million in India alone

- *Mary Stropes International*

- Up to 7 million unintended pregnancies could occur worldwide due to limited health care services brought about by Covid-19.

- *UNFPA*

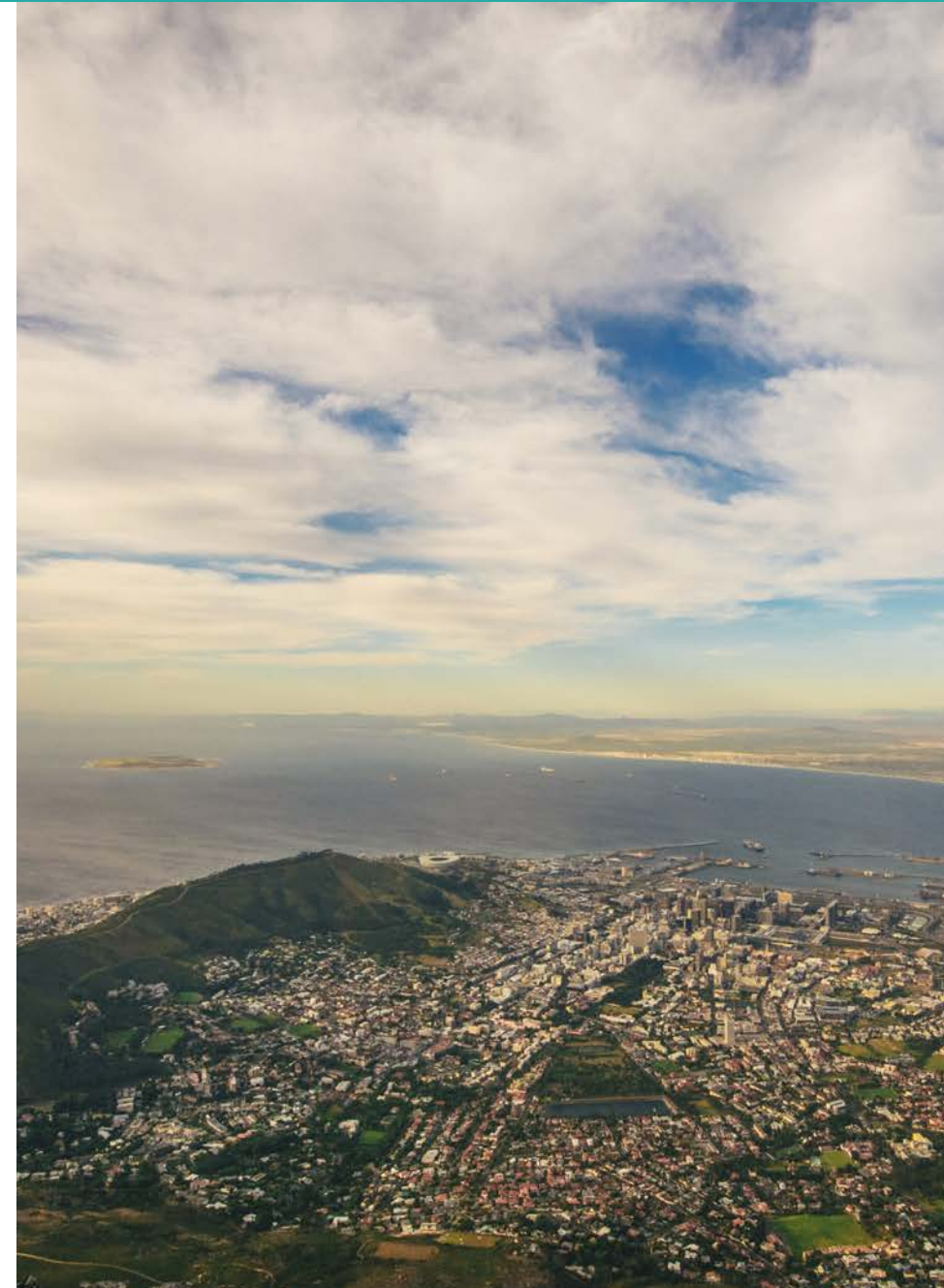
Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India





Unmet Need for Family Planning

- There is currently an estimated \$5.5 billion funding gap for meeting family planning needs globally.
- U.S. international aid for family planning programs represents less than .15% of the annual budget.
 - Funding for family planning programs is under threat.
 - The U.S. has denied contributions to the UNFPA since 2017 because of the Kemp-Kasten amendment.
 - The Trump Administration has also reinstated and expanded the Global Gag Rule, which limits global health programs.

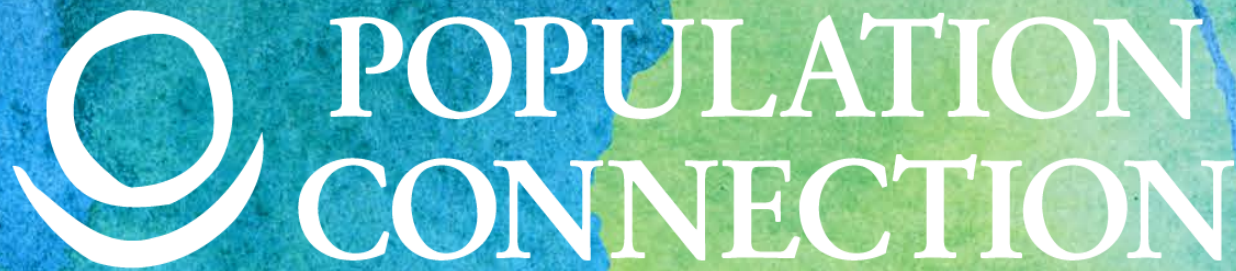




CONCLUSIONS

- Expanding access to FP/RH is critical to women's empowerment and can play an impactful role in climate adaptation efforts.
- Slowing population growth through rights-based innovations like voluntary planning services and girls' education can mitigate climate change by offsetting emissions in the long-term.
- Family planning is a building block of resilience to climate change impacts.
- Family planning programs receive 1% of all overseas development assistance, and yet are some of the most cost-efficient and effective investments a country can make.





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